

Message Text

SECRET

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USMISSION USUN IMMEDIATE
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S E C R E T PARIS 37108

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NOFORN

CINCEUR ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PFOR, AG, US, FR, WS
SUBJ: FRENCH MILITARY INTERVENTION IN MAURITANIA

REFS: A. ALGIERS 3166. B. ALGIERS 3184.

1. ELYSEE INTERNATIONAL STAFF SOURCE CONFIRMED TO US
IN STRICT CONFIDENCE THAT FRENCH HAD INDEED CARRIED
OUT "HIGHLY EFFECTIVE" AIRSTRIKE BY 8 JAGUARS STATIONED
IN SENEGAL AGAINST POLISARIO COLUMN AND CAMP ON
MAURITANIAN TERRITORY DECEMBER 12-13.

2. DECISION WAS MADE BY GISCARD IN LONDON WHEN IT
BECAME CLEAR THAT NEW POLISARIO ATTACK ON ZOUERATE
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PAGE 02 PARIS 37108 211353Z

MINERAL TRAIN WAS IN PROCESS. CONTRARY TO PRESS CLAIMS
THIS HAS BEEN ONLY FRENCH MILITARY INTERVENTION SO FAR.

3. ALTHOUGH STRIKE WAS MILITARILY HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL,
GISCARD IS NOT CONVINCED THAT POLISARIO'S ANNOUNCEMENT
OF DECEMBER 14, THAT IT WOULD RELEASE FRENCH HOSTAGES,
WAS MADE IN FULL KNOWLEDGE OF EXTENT OF DAMAGE THE

FRENCH STRIKE HAD DONE. SOURCE IMPLIED, ON CONTRARY, THAT FRENCH MAY HAVE SENSITIVE INFORMATION SUGGESTING THAT THIS MAY NOT HAVE BEEN THE CASE. AS OF DECEMBER 20 GISCARD WAS THEREFORE STILL CONCERNED WHETHER POLISARIO MIGHT, AT LAST MINUTE, CHANGE ITS MIND AND NOT RELEASE HOSTAGES. POLITICALLY THIS WOULD BE HIGHLY EMBARRASSING TO HIM, SINCE FRENCH LEFT IS ALREADY MOUNTING A CAMPAIGN AGAINST PUBLISHED, BUT OFFICIALLY UNCONFIRMED, REPORTS OF FRENCH MILITARY INTERVENTION. WE ASSUME POLISARIO'S DECEMBER 19 REAFFIRMATION THAT THE HOSTAGES WOULD BE RELEASED (WHICH HAS BEEN PUBLISHED HERE DECEMBER 20) HAS BEEN REASSURING.

4. WHATEVER THE OUTCOME FOR HOSTAGES, OUR SOURCE SAYS THAT GISCARD FORESEES THAT THE POLISARIO'S AND ALGERIA'S PRESSURE ON MAURITANIA WILL CONTINUE. IF FRANCE WERE TO DISCONTINUE SUPPORT FOR MAURITANIA'S TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY HE IS CONVINCED THAT THIS WOULD HAVE PROFOUNDLY DEMORALIZING EFFECTS ON THE OTHER FRANCOPHONE COUNTRIES IN AFRICA, BUT PARTICULARLY THOSE BORDERING ON ALGERIA AND LIBYA. MOREOVER, ONCE THESE PRESSURES WERE SUCCESSFUL IN MAURITANIA, IT WOULD ONLY BE A MATTER OF TIME UNTIL SIMILAR PRESSURES WERE DIRECTED AGAINST THOSE STATES. IN INTERESTS OF MAINTAINING FRANCOPHONE AFRICA'S SECURITY, FRANCE THEREFORE HAS NO CHOICE BUT TO DRAW THE LINE ON HELPING TO DEFEND
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PAGE 03 PARIS 37108 211353Z

MAURITANIAN TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY WHEN ASKED, AND PARTICULARLY WHEN FRENCHMEN WORKING THERE WERE THREATENED. SOURCE EMPHASIZED THAT THIS DOES NOT REPEAT NOT MEAN, AS THE ALGERIANS AND THE POLISARIO CLAIM, THAT FRANCE NECESSARILY HAS EQUALLY RIGID POSITIONS ON OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SAHARA ISSUE.

5. ELYSEE REAFFIRMED GISCARD'S PERSONAL APPRECIATION FOR US INTERVENTION ON BEHALF OF THE HOSTAGES WHICH WAS IMPORTANT.

6. QUAI PERCEPTION SAME SITUATION REQUESTED SEPTEL.
HARTMAN

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NNN

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